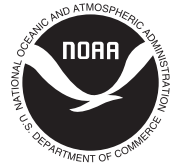


COASTAL CONNECTIONS



VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION FOCUSED ON TOOLS FOR COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGERS

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2006

C O A S T A L
C O N N E C T I O N S
P R O F I L E



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Senior Scientist and
Associate Dean, Woods
Hole Oceanographic
Institution; Director,
Woods Hole Sea Grant

Hometown: Falmouth,
Massachusetts; grew up in
Manchester, New Hampshire

Education: BS (cum laude)
in biology, Stonehill
College; MS and PhD in
zoology, University of
New Hampshire

**Most fulfilling aspect of your
job:** Working with students.

**Most challenging aspect
of your job:** Long-term
planning with uncertain
federal budgets.

**One work-related
accomplishment you're proud
of:** Focusing attention on
the long-term effects of
petroleum hydrocarbons
on reproduction and
development in populations
of marine animals.

**One personal accomplishment
you're proud of:** My children.

**Things you do in your spare
time:** Watch lots of soccer
and basketball games, read
mystery novels, and knit.

Continued on Page 2

THIS ISSUE'S FOCUS

MEETING PLANNING AND FACILITATION

In coastal management, successful conferences and meetings play an important role in learning from others, sharing lessons learned, discovering the best management practices and latest science tools, and making informed decisions. What is the key to planning these events, and how can they be run more effectively?

"If you don't know where you're going, you're probably not going to get there," according to Ann Weaver, contract facilitator and trainer for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Services Center.

Before the meeting, certain questions need to be considered: What is the primary goal of this particular meeting? What tasks need to be accomplished? What issues need to be discussed? Of these questions, do any need resolution at this meeting? Will the appropriate people be present to finalize decisions—or ensure that commitments can be made and the decisions are carried out? What is the budget? Where will the meeting be held?

The amount of preparation varies from meeting to meeting. However, each gathering takes a great deal of patience, attention to detail, and willingness to change on the fly. Making sure everything is planned well and goes off without a hitch can be a daunting task. Designing an agenda and having specific goals, tasks, and issues can help prevent headaches and disasters.

"Roles, responsibilities, and a timeline must be determined. This is a clear and specific pathway to give everyone an understanding of those steps that must take place prior to, during, and after the meeting, who is to handle each task, and when it is to be completed," says Gale Peek, senior conference planner for the NOAA Coastal Services Center.

Facilitation

Many organizations utilize a neutral third party—either in-house or from an outside company—to help manage and improve the way meetings are developed and conducted. That's where the facilitator comes in. Facilitation is a means of providing leadership, structure, and process without actually taking control or trying to influence the outcome. The goal is to make things easier and help others take the lead and assume responsibility.

"Facilitation is applying specific tools and techniques to help groups get things done effectively," says Weaver.

Continued on Page 2

Profile continued from Page 1

Family: Husband, John; son, Stefan (almost 15); daughter, Katie (almost 13); two dogs and two rabbits.

Favorite movie: *Casablanca*

In your CD player

right now: Afro Celt Sound System

"I grew up in New Hampshire and spent the summers going to the rocky intertidal areas and beaches along the New Hampshire coastline. My mother studied zoology in college and became my first teacher of the marine environment. My brother, sister, and I would spend hours combing through tide pools. Little did I know then my favorite summer pastime would become a lifelong career.

"After college and graduate school and one year of teaching at a small college, I came to Woods Hole to accept a postdoctoral scholarship at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and I have remained here for over 30 years. My primary research interests are the adaptations of marine animals to changes in habitat. This has led me to study such problems as starvation resistance in developing larvae, oil spills and the long-term effects of petroleum on marine animals, and nutritional relationships between symbionts and the host invertebrate.

"Our family lives on Cape Cod, and we enjoy hiking, listening to music, and going to sporting events. Both of our children play soccer and basketball, and we enjoy watching them play and cheering for their favorite teams."

Meeting Planning and Facilitation continued from Page 1



Instead of offering opinions, the facilitator provides structure and tools to help ensure everyone's voice is heard.

"The person who assumes this role pays attention to process and stays out of discussions—acting in much the way as a referee or umpire to give structure and discipline to sports," says Ingrid Bens, M.Ed., owner of Participative Dynamics, a facilitation consulting firm.

"They control what activities happen. They have their finger on the pulse and know when to move on or wrap things up. Most important, they help members define and reach their goals. The importance of knowing how and when to ask great probing questions can't be stressed enough. In fact, effective questioning is the key facilitative technique. As a facilitator, one can never ask too many questions."

To keep meetings running cohesively, there are times facilitators must remain calm, hold back, and check their egos at the door.

"The most effective facilitators are those that stay neutral," says Weaver. "The facilitator will lose the trust of the group if they appear biased or express opinions

during a controversy instead of mediating the group through the issue."

Ingrid Bens agrees: "One of the most important things that facilitators always need to remember is that they're working for all the group members, not just the person who invited them to be there. This ensures that the neutral third party does indeed stay neutral and champions all comments, regardless of who makes them. Clearly this is a skill that everyone who goes to meetings needs to possess."

The three main stages of facilitation:

- Assessment – Finding out what people need to get out of specific interactions or meetings.
- Design – Creating agendas that feature details of which tools and techniques will be used.
- Application – Neutrally leading group members in effective discussions using the techniques that maximize input and result in high-quality decisions everyone can live with.

The best things a facilitator can do include offering the group the right tools and techniques for their situation, assertively managing interactions to redirect inappropriate behaviors and keep things on track, ensuring that everyone gets heard, and helping group members collaborate to generate high-quality decisions.

The worst things a facilitator can do include failing to intervene when things go wrong, losing focus or energy, and pretending to be neutral but using leading questions and suggestions in such a way as to influence outcomes.

Meeting MANAGEMENT

Some common elements and helpful tips to improve your next meeting:

- A detailed agenda that spells out what will be discussed, the goals, and how much time will be allotted for each item
- Clear process notes that describe the tools and techniques that will be used
- Assigned roles, such as facilitator, chairperson, note taker, and timekeeper
- A set of group norms created by the members and posted in the meeting room
- Clarity about decision-making options and how they'll be used
- Effective member behaviors
- Periodic process checks to make sure progress is being made
- Clear conflict-management strategies
- A process that creates true closure
- Detailed and clear minutes
- Specific follow-up plans
- A post-meeting evaluation

Information courtesy of Ingrid Bens, *Facilitating with Ease!*

Conference PLANNER TIPS

The NOAA Coastal Services Center has organized large conferences for the coastal community, such as Coastal Zone and GeoTools. Here are some valuable suggestions from the Center's lead meeting planner, Gale Peek, to help prepare your organization for its next important conference.

DOS

- Organize everything—get specific needs from clients—dates, times, number of people, budget, food and beverage needs, agenda, breakouts, exhibit space, posters, audio-visual needs, etc. Go over every minute detail to determine these specifics.
- Develop a realistic budget.
- Say no when necessary (diplomatically).
- Have everything in writing!
- Be able to problem solve quickly, and always have a backup plan.
- Develop relationships, and foster them with both partners and vendors.
- Have clear, concise goals and ideas.

DON'TS

- Don't assume something is being done. Check on it personally.
- Don't give out incorrect information or promise things you cannot deliver.
- Don't wait until the last minute.
- Don't accept less than you contracted for both in quality and quantity.
- Don't ask someone to do something you wouldn't do.
- Don't be so frugal that quality becomes an issue—use balance in your decisions.

CENTER FOCUS

Increase Your Meeting Leadership Skills

The NOAA Coastal Services Center offers many training opportunities, including Public Issues and Conflict Management, which teaches participants to design, conduct, and control meetings in public forums. For more information on the Center's course offerings, visit www.csc.noaa.gov/training/.

Coastal Connections Reader Survey

The Center is contracting with Daniel J. Edelman, Inc., on a *Coastal Connections* survey, which will help guide improvements to the newsletter. If you receive the survey, please complete and return it at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your participation.

Check Out Coastal Services

Want to learn what else is happening in the coastal community? *Coastal Services* is a national trade journal for coastal resource managers. Visit www.csc.noaa.gov/magazine/ to subscribe and see current and past editions.

Coastal Connections is a publication of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coastal Services Center, produced for the coastal resource management community. Each issue of this free bimonthly newsletter focuses on a tool, information resource, or methodology of interest to the nation's coastal resource managers.

Please send us your questions and suggestions for future editions. To subscribe or contribute to the newsletter, contact our editors at

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NOAA/CSC/20612-PUB

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NEWS AND NOTES

Coastal Managers' Meeting Draws Near

The annual Ocean and Coastal Program Managers' Meeting will take place March 7 through 10 in Washington, D.C. The conference is a forum for the nation's ocean and coastal program managers to meet and exchange information about important resource management issues. The National Ocean Service's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management is the conference sponsor. Visit <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/pmm/> for details.

Sea Grant Launches Recovery Efforts in the Wake of Recent Storms

In response to the recent hurricanes, the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program has launched a Recovery Resources Web site that offers information on wetlands, seafood, water quality, ports, economic impacts, and rebuilding concerns. Experts in a variety of fields have provided information for the site and updates are made as new data become available. To learn more about Sea Grant's Gulf relief efforts, visit www.laseagrant.org/hurricane/index.htm or www.seagrant.noaa.gov/other/admininfo.html.

Mid-Atlantic-Region Conference Planned on Stream Restoration and Protection

The Mid-Atlantic sections of the American Water Resources Association will host their annual conference at Montclair State University's New Jersey School of Conservation in Branchville, New Jersey, from June 14 to 16. If your organization is interested in sponsoring or exhibiting, please contact michael_cox@urscorp.com or mccrackt@co.somerset.nj.us by May 15. To submit an abstract, check out www.awra.org/state/new_jersey/mac2006/.

Transitions

Jeff Gunderson has been named acting director of Minnesota Sea Grant... Stephanie Bailenson has been named director of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection... After 16 ½ years, Christine Gault has retired as manager of the Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

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